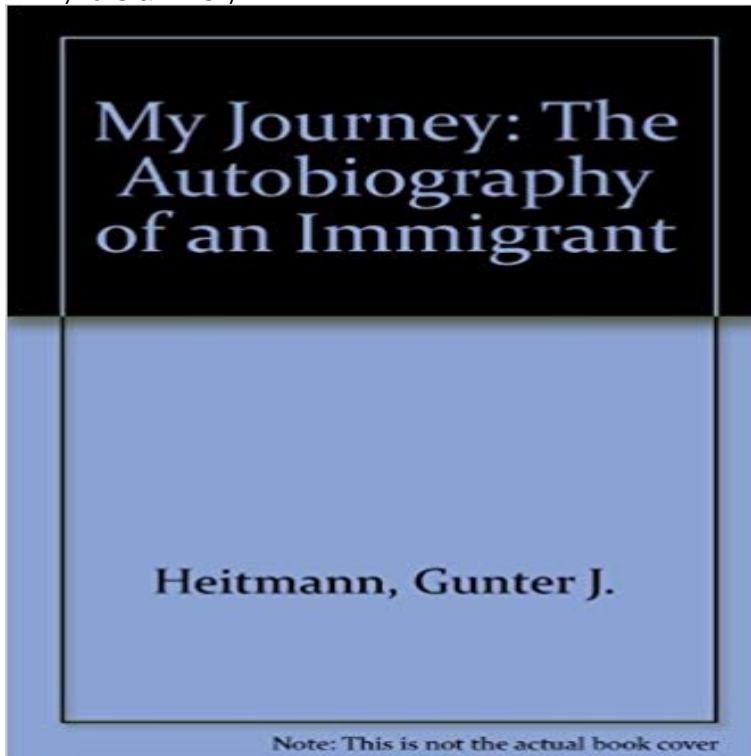


My Journey



November 30, 1951. The Homeland, an old passenger ship built in 1905 in Glasgow, Scotland, by Alexander Stephens & Sons Ltd., is slowly working her way down the Elbe river toward Cuxhaven, my hometown. But I am not coming home - I am going away! On board are 951 passengers, almost all of them emigrants. Eight hundred and sixty six are traveling Tourist class. I am one of them. Our destination is America! It is a cold, clear November day, which in itself is unusual for the region I have called home since I was born in 1930. This time of year calls for foggy, damp, miserable weather. Is the good weather an omen that good things are going to happen? Or is it telling me I should not have left? As darkness slowly descends my mood changes from gloom to elation and back again. I have never known such anxiety and am just now realizing the enormity of it all: one cardboard suitcase filled with cheap, worn clothes, less than 20 dollars in my pocket, a bill for \$260 (for this voyage, as well as visa costs, etc.) awaiting me upon my arrival, no command of the English language and no knowledge of any job waiting for me! I am contemplating whether or not I should go through with this when reality sets in; it is too late! As I stand on deck I can see a lighter area on the horizon. It must be a concentration of lights, meaning Cuxhaven is not far away. I feel pretty good seeing the lights get brighter. How will I feel when they disappear behind us? The fact that it is my parentss 22nd wedding anniversary somehow does not seem to be very important. I am, however, already missing a certain young lady and also my friends. As the lights get brighter I am asking myself many questions: Did I make the right decision? Will I make it? Will I have the guts to return if I dont? Will I stay forever if I DO make it? What will it look like if I return, when so many have left and did not? One last time the ship slows down.

As the pilot boat appears I have one more thought of jumping in, for I know my fiance, my parents, my relatives and my friends are all standing on the Alte Liebe, an ancient bulwark located at the point where the Elbe river and the North Sea meet, a mere 300 yards away from me. And yet, it may as well be 5,000 miles. I am on my way. As Cuxhaven disappears behind us a melancholy song called Heimat, nie werd ich dich sehn keeps creeping back into my mind. Translated the song says Home, never will I see you again. Am I scared? Very! Am I happy? Probably not! Am I excited? Very! Do I know the difference between being scared and excited? Probably not! Analyzing my position, I then promise myself to always give it my all and never let anyone know about my insecurities. I am going to make it! Period!

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